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**John L. Cattelan
Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs
SB 111, AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR
CHILD CARE PROGRAMS
HB 5004, AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
MOBILE CRISIS INTERVENTION SERVICES FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
MARCH 18, 2022**

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is John Cattelan and I am with the Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 111, An Act Concerning Funding for Child Care Programs and HB 5004, An Act Concerning Funding for Behavioral Health Mobile Crises Intervention Services for School Students.

SB 111, An Act Concerning Funding for Child Care Programs

The Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs supports SB 111, An Act Concerning Funding for Child Care Programs.

During the past 20 years YMCA childcare centers have received one rate increase of three percent for Care4Kids and School Readiness. During that same time, the minimum wage has increased by over 50% and inflation has risen by almost 50% as well.

The fact is that Care4Kids provider payments are at the 50th percentile of the market rate for infants and toddlers and only the 25th percentile for preschool while the federal government recommends paying at the 75th percentile of the market rate.

We also believe that Early Childcare Educators are professionals that should be paid in a manner that reflects the importance of their profession. These professionals are helping our future students learn and grow in an

environment that will prepare them for success in K-12 schools and we need to place a public value on these positions.

During these difficult times we simply can't ask parents to pay more for their childcare. We need the state of Connecticut to support these professionals. Our YMCAs have had to close classrooms across the state because of our inability to find qualified early childhood educators.

Quality childcare is a necessity if our state's economy is to return to pre-pandemic levels. Childcare is already unaffordable and without a meaningful increase in reimbursement rates, the state will be making the children care system significantly more expensive. It is imperative that our childcare centers receive a rate increase so that we can continue to provide safe and quality childcare to Connecticut's children.

HB 5004, An Act Concerning Funding for Behavioral Health Mobile Crises Intervention Services for School Students

The Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs is supportive of HB 5004. However, we would strongly encourage including a provision that fund mobile crisis intervention units during the summer as well.

In the summer of 2021, our camps witnessed an unprecedented surge with children needing behavioral health treatment. We witnessed an increase in depression, anxiety and related behavioral concerns from our campers and younger camp staff.

Just because school is no longer in session doesn't mean that children no longer need mental health services. We believe an investment in mental health services during the summer is vitally important.

It would be a disservice to Connecticut's children, experiencing mental health issues, to leave them to their own demise while school is not in session.

We appreciate the legislature's urgency to address the shortfalls in the availability of mental health services for all of Connecticut's children. We hope the legislature will recognize the summer months are important in addressing children's mental health.

Thank you!